

Appl. No.: 10/030,974  
Group Art Unit: 1623  
Applicants' Reply to the Office Action mailed March 17, 2004

**In the Claims:**

Please amend claims 19 and 31, without prejudice, as shown below in the following complete listing of all claims ever presented. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the instant application:

Claims 1-18 (Canceled).

Claim 19 (Currently amended): A process for preparing a crosslinker-free composition, said process comprising:

- (a) providing an aqueous mixture of a chitosan, wherein the aqueous mixture has a viscosity of from 1,000 mPas to 100,000 mPas;
- (b) combining a precipitant with the aqueous mixture in an amount and at a rate sufficient to precipitate the chitosan such that ~~form~~ a crosslinker-free chitosan composition having physically entangled strands of the chitosan is formed; and
- (c) drying the crosslinker-free chitosan composition to form a crosslinker-free three-dimensional structure.

Claim 20 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the aqueous mixture is present in a state selected from the group consisting of solutions and homogenous suspensions.

Claim 21 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the chitosan is present in an amount of from 0.1 to 15% by weight, based on the aqueous mixture.

Claim 22 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the aqueous mixture has a pH value of from 1 to 7.5.

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Claim 23 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the aqueous mixture has a viscosity of from 10,000 mPas to 40,000 mPas.

Claim 24 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the chitosan comprises a cationically-derivatized chitosan.

Claim 25 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the precipitant comprises an aqueous solution selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions of hydrogen carbonates, carbonates, hydrogen phosphates, hydroxides of alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, ammonia and organic nitrogen bases, and combinations thereof.

Claim 26 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the precipitant comprises an aqueous solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate.

Claim 27 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the crosslinker-free chitosan composition formed in step (b) has a pH value of from 5 to 14.

Claim 28 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, wherein the drying of the crosslinker-free chitosan composition comprises freeze-drying.

Claim 29 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, further comprising combining one or more auxiliaries or additives with the aqueous mixture prior to drying.

Claim 30 (Previously presented): The process according to claim 19, further comprising combining one or more auxiliaries or additives with the crosslinker-free composition subsequent to drying.

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**Claim 31 (Currently amended):** A process for preparing a crosslinker-free composition, said process comprising:

(a) providing an aqueous mixture of a cationically-derivatized chitosan, wherein the aqueous mixture has a viscosity of from 10,000 mPas to 40,000 mPas and a pH value of from 1 to 7.5;

(b) combining a precipitant selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions of hydrogen carbonates, carbonates, hydrogen phosphates, hydroxides of alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, ammonia and organic nitrogen bases, and combinations thereof, with the aqueous mixture in an amount and at a rate sufficient to precipitate the chitosan such that form a crosslinker-free chitosan composition having physically entangled strands of the chitosan is formed; and

(c) freeze-drying the crosslinker-free chitosan composition to form a crosslinker-free three-dimensional structure.

**Claim 32 (Previously presented):** A crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.

**Claim 33 (Previously presented):** A crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 23.

**Claim 34 (Previously presented):** A crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 25.

**Claim 35 (Previously presented):** A crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 28.

**Claim 36 (Previously presented):** A crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 31.

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Claim 37 (Previously presented): A cosmetic preparation comprising a crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.

Claim 38 (Previously presented): A food additive comprising a crosslinker-free, chitosan composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.